

**TESTIMONY OF JAQUAN HARRIS  
IN SUPPORT OF SB 842, AN ACT CONCERNING FOSTER CHILDREN AND THE  
DESIGNATION OF SURROGATE PARENTS AND HB 5658, AN ACT CONCERNING  
EDUCATIONAL SURROGATES, THE JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM AND CHILDREN  
REQUIRING SPECIAL EDUCATION**

Committee on Children  
February 17, 2015

Submitted by Jaquan Harris

Senator Bartolomeo, Representative Urban, Distinguished Members of the Committee on Children:

I submit this testimony **in support of SB 842 and HB 5658.**

I am Jaquan Harris, 18 years old, I attend Curry College in Milton Massachusetts, previously Central High School in Bridgeport CT. I can be reached at harrisjaquan13@yahoo.com

I live on campus but when I come back for breaks I stay at my foster home of ten years. I am not now or have I ever been in the juvenile justice system.

I have never had an education surrogate because I do not have special education needs.

I think **EVERY** child that comes into foster care or the juvenile justice system goes through a rough patch in their life until they learn how to cope with being in their situation. School often takes a big hit during this transitional period because no matter how much we wish the world could just slow down for a second, it doesn't. During my younger years in the foster care system I was doing poorly in school because every time I would get comfortable at one school it was off to the next one. Sadly, kind of like clockwork.

Before I graduated high school I had the pleasure of speaking to a group of young people at a juvenile facility in Middletown CT called Connecticut Juvenile Training School (CJTS). Leading up to my presentation people were telling me that CJTS was nothing but a jail for bad kids, but, I promised to be there and I kept my promise. I walked into CJTS and about an hour later I was in the middle of this wonderful interactive conversation with 15-20 amazing peers. A common factor that all of my peers had was that their education was important to them and all they wanted was a chance and some help. When I walked out of that building I remembered what people told me about CJTS and I realized that those people had judged, and they were wrong. How can you expect people to change their lives if you don't give them any help?

I had the opportunity to navigate most of my primary school years with a foster mother who bent over backwards to make sure that I, not only was receiving an education, but a good one. I've heard stories about education surrogates being people who did the same as my foster mother. So, my question is, if you see a child in this system with a need, why not help?

- Jaquan Harris, *Jaquan Harris*, February 15<sup>th</sup>, 2015